

# Disaster Relief Grants for Historic Preservation

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**R**ecent natural disasters prompted the United States Congress to approve supplemental appropriations for disaster relief. Public Law 103-175 included \$5 million out of a total \$6 billion appropriated to aid recovery from the flooding in 1993 in the Midwest. On January 17, 1994, the Northridge Earthquake caused significant damage in three counties around Los Angeles, CA. Congress responded in Public Law 103-211 by earmarking \$10 million for historic preservation activities from a total appropriation of \$550 million from the President's Discretionary Fund for Unanticipated Needs.

Consultations between the National Conference of State Historic Preservation Officers (NCSHPO), the National Trust for Historic Preservation (Trust), State Historic Preservation Officers (SHPOs) in the affected states, and the National Park Service (NPS) quickly reached a consensus about procedures for dividing the funds and for coordinating the emergency relief to be assisted by these grants.

The 1993 flood relief funds were divided as follows: \$910,000 each to Illinois and Iowa; \$905,000 to Missouri; \$100,000 each to Minnesota, North Dakota, South Dakota, and Wisconsin; \$50,000 each to Kansas and Nebraska; and \$1,775,000 to the National Trust to be used for work in the nine Midwest states. Special attention was given to ensure close coordination among preservation organizations, to speed the delivery of services, and to avoid duplication of effort. One of the specific requirements placed on the grant awards by the NPS was that the Trust negotiate and sign a written agreement with each of the nine SHPOs. This agreement varied a little in different states, but clarified how the Trust and the SHPO would coordinate their activities and their public infor-

mation, technical assistance, and subgrant selection processes.

The Trust decided to use its flood relief grant to fund nonconstruction activities such as on-site inspections by teams of preservation professionals to inspect buildings and provide technical advice. The Trust also assisted with the rapid reprinting and widespread dissemination of a technical booklet put together by the Wisconsin SHPO, with assistance from the Preservation Assistance Division of NPS, entitled *Treatment of Flood-Damaged Older and Historic Properties*. The states' grants are being used to replace furnaces and wiring, to repoint masonry, to repair floors and siding, and to provide technical assistance on how to stabilize and dry out flooded properties.

In 1994, Public Law 103-211 appropriated \$550 million for disaster relief. Of this sum, \$5 million was earmarked



El Adobe Market (c. 1920) on Hollywood Boulevard showing earthquake damage. Photo courtesy Historic Resources Group, Hollywood, CA.

for the Trust to subgrant to Ste. Genevieve, MO, to help protect the highly significant French Settlement district. An additional \$5 million has been divided between the California SHPO and the Trust to preserve and protect properties damaged by the Northridge Earthquake. The SHPO will receive \$3.5 million and the Trust \$1.5 million. Both offices will execute agreements with the Los Angeles Conservancy, which will serve as the focal point for all subgrant applications to avoid confusion among the property owners. Of particular concern in California is the repair and protection of significant adobe buildings from the state's Spanish and Mexican historical periods, and the seismic retrofitting of many historic buildings.

While SHPOs have found the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) to be more sensitive to historic preservation issues as a result of past disasters (Hurricane Hugo and the Loma Prieta Earthquake in 1989, and Hurricane Andrew in 1992), the funding furnished by these two supplemental appropriations has enabled the Trust and SHPOs to mount large-scale efforts to protect and preserve historic properties affected by the Midwest Floods of 1993 and the Northridge Earthquake of 1994.



The Ferry Building (1922) on Hollywood Boulevard, damaged by the earthquake, has since been demolished. Photo courtesy Historic Resources Group, Hollywood, CA.

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